Philadelphia Teamsters Facing Probe

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PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The boss of Teamsters Local 107, one of the biggest in the million-member union, denies he leads "a bunch of hoods." But the Philadelphia district attorney broadened his probe Thursday on grounds the local is laced with murder, corruption and gambling.

Edward Battisfore, president and secretary-treasurer of the 12,000 truck driver local, pictures 107 as tough but law-abiding.

"We're not altar boys," he said. "We don't pretend to be, but neither are we a bunch of hoods like Arlen Specter would make us out to be."

D.A. Specter has charged Local 107 has been invaded by racketeers, and employs strong-arm goons to keep dissenters in line.

The current probe began after the murder of Robert A. DeGeorge, 33, a week ago. The Teamster was gunned down in a shootout in front of Local 107 headquarters. Last year a Teamster organizer and a lady friend were slain inside the building, located about a dozen squares north of historic Independence Hall.

James R. Hoffa, the tough, squat Teamsters international chief, is serving an eight-year term in the Lewisburg (Pa.) Penitentiary for conspiracy. He recently lost an appeal for a new trial.

Local 107 has a long history of legal and union trouble. It has been split again and again in struggles for power within the ranks. Specter said DeGeorge was killed because he was in the group who sought to dump Battisfore.

Raymond Cohan, a former secretary-treasurer, served a prison term for raiding the local's treasury. Specter, who prosecuted Cohen, also sent five other Local 107 members to jail in the same conspiracy case.

Now Specter, the Republican candidate for mayor, is talking about having a special grand jury make a full investigation of every part of 107's operation.